# FUN, FACT AND FABLE.

SOME of the state legislatures are committing a grevious mistake in granting charters indiscriminately to inter-urban electric railways, and giving them the free run of public highways, and thus without requiring them to pay any franchise tax for the privileges thus liberally bestowed, says Franklin L. Pope, in *The Engineering Magazine*. This is a policy which no state can afford to pursue, and one which is sure to ultimately result in widespread disaster. While most of the local horse railroads which have been converted into electric roads have proved very profitable investments, it does not necessarily follow that tracks can be put down on every cross-country road, and made to become bonanzas for the bondholders, merely because they are operated by electricity. It has by no means been satisfactorily demonstrated that for distances of five to 10 miles, where hourly or half-hourly trips of a small car are all that the traffic requires, electricity possesses any economical advantages over steam, or even over horse power. The prevailing craze for covering the rural districts with a network of electric railways is evidently being assiduously fostered by the manufacturers of electric apparatus, in order to enlarge the market for their wares, and so long as the public can be induced to purchase and pay for the bonds issued to pay for these projects, enterprise and prosperity will doubtless continue to go hand in hand. "The American public," as the astute Mr. Gould once remarked, "are fond of bonds."

### What Is Fresh in Music?

While we talk of the work of a great master as being ever fresh, we are secretly sensible of the fact that it is no longer fresh to us. After the second or third heating no piece of music is ever the same to us again. In a great and complex work we may still for some time continue to discover the unexpected, but by the time we know it thoroughly it has become but an echo of its former self and we greet it with the faint smile with which we linger over the photographs that remind us of the holidays of past years.

With equal truth it may be said that the music of one generation does not produce quite the same effect on the next. When the prayer from Rossini's "Mose" was first performed in Naples, women fainted and men trembled. There is very little excitement to be got out of the prayer from "Mose,' in the present day, and perhaps 50 years hence even the overture to "Tannhauser" will be dry and cold. But this only shows how much of musical impressiveness depends on this element of vague apprehension.

Each generation, tired of the outworn devices which furnish its predecessor with excitement, demands newer and stronger effects to stimulate its emotions. As the devices of the classicist grow pale, the listening public demands a romantic school, with new forms and strange progressions. The romantic school would, if some hearers had their way, be succeeded in turn by a chaotic school, and in the race for new sensations all vestige of artistic form would disappear.—*Macmillan's Maganize.*

### A Serious Question.

O, tell me Baby, on my knee,
You dear and dimpled Dorothy,
What is it that you find in me,
So captivating?

Tell me how it has come to this,
That now you seek my careless kiss,
And clasp my neck with cries of bliss
And keep me waiting.

And tell me why the girls I know,
Are all too prim to treat me so,
But coldly frown and never show
Love's sweet revealings?

Is it because their hearts have turned
From childish things, that Love is spurned,
Or is it, simply, that they've learned
To hide their feelings?
—*Harry Romaine, in June Godey's.*

### Macaulay in the Nursery.

Those who know Lord Macaulay only as the brilliant essayist and historian and the polished orator may perhaps be surprised to find him in Lady Knutsford's article in the May number of the *English Illustrated Magazine* in the character of a playmate in the nursery. Confirmed bachelors are generally credited with a lurking sympathy with the old curmudgeon in "Oliver Twist," who divided babies into "mealy-faced babies and beefy-faced babies," and dismissed them all as equally detestable; but Lord Macaulay, as his nephew and biographer has already shown, had a genuine sympathy with little children. This fact none knew better than Lady Knutsford (nee Trevelyan), who, as one of his nieces on whom he bestowed the pet name of "Baba," has a lively personal recollection of his fondness for making rhymes for little children and writing them out in bold print capitals with his own hand. One of these relating to an incident that happened at the church near Rothley temple, Macaulay's picturesque birthplace, whilst the Trevelyans were staying there on a visit, is given in facsimile from the manuscript, and is headed "A Song About Two Naughty Boys, for My Dear Baba."

### An Aberdeen Story.

A doctor in the Turriff district was one day going his rounds when he met a vendor of herring, and that commodity being rather scarce at the time in question, the doctor addressed the fish-monger thus: "Well, John, what's the price of herring to-day?" "Oh," replied John, "they're saxpence the dizzen, but I'll gie ye ane to the bargain if ye'll gang roun' and see my wife, for she's nae very weel."

### The Death of May.

A song for dying May!
A sad song?—no!
For down the opening way
Red roses blow.

Lo! from the fair May's death
We gain this boon:
In home on every breath,
The balm of June.
—*Clinton Scollard in June Godey's.*

### His Vocation.

A well known Lanarkshire bailie, famous for his wit and pawky humor, made a good hit at the annual conversasione of the local art club one evening recently. The worthy magistrate, who has a genuine love for art, was speaking somewhat enthusiastically of the work of a young Scotch painter of promise, when a would-be virtuose member of the club who held a contrary opinion, rudely interrupted by asking what the bailie knew about fine art. "Well," said the worthy magistrate, with a sly twinkle in his eye, "I have always been under the impression that my vocation is truly one of the fine arts." And then the auditors roared, and the boorish interrupter hastily took his leave.

### Lord Derby Proposes "The Queen."

Lord Derby's best speeches were his unreported ones. Upon one occasion he demanded if any reporters were present. "No," came the answer. "Thank heaven! then one can say any darned thing that comes into one's head." He was proposing "The Queen," and this is how he did it: "Gentlemen, I rise to propose the inevitable toast. Gentlemen, the working of our constitution depends upon the manner in which those who acquire powers under it take care not to push their privileges to lengths which might be dangerous. We have to be thankful, therefore, that we have such a sovereign as the queen, who has never been unreasonable. If we had had such a creature as George I., a monarch so silly and dissipated as George II., or an utter blackguard like George IV., or even so well meaning but entirely stupid person as George III., I don't know what you think, gentlemen, but I think, and probably you will agree with me, that we should have had very rough times. Gentlemen, I propose 'The Queen.'"

### To One Who Gave It.

"Only a woman's hair." There was no name
Upon the slender packet; and they blame
The man who would not bare for all to view
The soul of her who trusted him, he knew
To whom belonged that curl of softest hair,
And thus he wrote, determined to leave there
No trace which to the world might ever show
Who was the woman that had loved him so.
But all who love have relics: on my heart
There rests a locket, and I never part
By day or night with one small tress of hair.
Yet must I tell the world who placed it there
Within the locket; call on all to see
My greatest treasure, say 'twas given to me
By one I love, who loves me not again,
And show to curious eyes my love is vain?
And must I own to all that when I wake
I find my hand close clasps it for the sake
Of one from whom I took that tress of hair
Which now is mine, say that I breathe a prayer
That God will bless and keep you all your life,
In sun and shade, in joy and peace and strife?
I hold the world has nothing here to do,
It shall not come between my soul and you;
Like the great Dean, I keep your name apart,
You only know what rests upon my heart.
—*The Academy.*

### An Extraordinary Occurrence.

Lately in the zoological gardens at Breslau in the cage of the large snakes a South American boa constrictor contended for a rabbit with a very large python from West Africa. It did not succeed, however, the python being the stronger of the two, and it withdrew. About two hours later the keeper found the same snakes fighting for another rabbit. As the keeper supposed that the boa, which was the weaker of the two, would again give up its prey, he left them to themselves and went home. The next morning he was horror-stricken to find that the unfortunate boa had not let go its hold, and had been swallowed by the python as a pendant to the rabbit. The boa was nearly seven feet long and correspondingly thick. The python had already swallowed one rabbit before the one which proved fatal to the boa. Its circumference throughout its length was from 23 to 28 inches, and its skin was expanded to double its usual size. The supposition that the snake might perhaps not be able to digest the boa proved false. Digestion only proceeded somewhat slower than usual.

### A Thankless Sinner.

A *Journal* reader was looking over an old newspaper the other day, when he found the following incident, which he thought would bear reviving:

It was in an English hospital. The chaplain was making his morning rounds when he met a porter.

"How's Robinson this morning?" he asked.

"'Ee's dead, sor," answered the porter.

"Dead!"

"Yes, sor."

"But why didn't you call me? I might have been able to comfort the poor fellow a little in his last moments."

"Hi comforted 'm myself, sor."

"You? Indeed! And what did you say to comfort him?"

"Hi said to 'im, 'Robinson, Hi suppose you know you're werry sick?'

"'Yes,' says 'ee.

"'Robinson, Hi suppose you know you can't last long.'

"'Yes,' says 'ee.

"'Robinson, Hi suppose you know you've been werry wicked.'

"'Yes,' says 'ee.

"'Robinson, Hi suppose you know you can't go to heaven.'

"'Yes,' says 'ee.

"'Well, Robinson,' says Hi, 'you ought to be werry thankful that there's a place provided for you fellows to go to.'

"'Yes,' says 'ee.

"And then 'ee turned 'is face to the wall an' died without even thanking me for comforting 'im."—*Boston Journal.*

### Is the Secret of Egyptians Out?

A writer in the new number of the *Quarterly*, treating of literary discoveries in Egypt, mentions as among the most promising the very unexpected and the very important discovery of a long and elaborate inscription in Etruscan characters and the Etruscan language, now in the museum at Agram, on the wrapper of a mummy. When deciphered this inscription will enable us to solve "one of the most obstinate riddles of historical science."

### Early in the Spring.

Light foot and tight foot
And green grass spread;
Early in the morning—
But hope is on ahead.

Stout foot and proud foot
And gray dust spread;
Early in the evening,
And hope lies dead.

Long life and short life—
The last word said—
Early in the evening,
There lies the bed.

Brief day and bright day
And sunset red;
Early in the evening—
The stars are overhead.
—*Robert Louis Stevenson, in Scribner's Magazine.*

### With an Eye to the Future.

Mr. Billus was looking over the plans of a new barn he was preparing to build.

"I don't care about having any windows on the side facing the kitchen yard," he said.

"But you will need them for light," replied the architect.

"Light nothing!" roared Mr. Billus, "Those windows call for 64 panes of glass and I've got a boy 8 years old! Leave 'em out!"—*Chicago Tribune.*

### More to the Purpose.

"If this helps you," said the doctor, signing his name to the prescription and folding it, "I should be glad if you would let me know."

"If it doesn't help me, doc," replied the caller in a clear, distinct tone of voice, as he handed over the required $5, "I'll let you know it—you can bet a trunkful of skeletons on that. Good afternoon."

### An Inapt Translation.

A German student not very well acquainted with English tried to quote the passage, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," as follows: "The ghost is willing but the meat is feeble."

### Sir Boyle Roche.

In every account of the Irish parliament Sir Boyle Roche comes in with the persistency of King Charles' head in Mr. Dick's memorial. His "bird" is as well known as the phoenix, and bids fair to share its immortality.

"Sure, Mr. Speaker," said Sir Boyle on the occasion that has made him famous, "how could a man be in two places at once—unless he were a bird?"

But Sir Boyle is not a mere creation of legend. He was a real living man, a fine bluff, soldierlike old gentleman, holding some post at the Viceregal court, sitting for a government borrough, and always voting faithfully for the "Castle." The debate one night was on sinecures, which Curran had indignantly denounced, and twitted by one of the opposite side on some personal inconsistency in the matter he replied hotly:

"Sir, I am the guardian of my own honor."

To which Sir Boyle neatly rejoined:

"Then the gentleman himself has got a very pretty sinecure."—*All the Year Round.*

### A Curious Experiment.

An American acrobat betted a Vienna athlete last week a considerable sum that he could not bear having a litre of water fall upon his hand drop by drop from a height of only three feet. The athlete has an enormous hand, and everybody present believed that the American must lose his bet. When 300 drops had fallen, however, the athlete's face became red, and he looked as if in pain. At the four hundred and twentieth drop he gave up, saying it was impossible to bear the pain any longer. The palm of his hand was swollen and inflamed, and in one place the skin had broken open and showed the flesh. Only a small portion of the litre of water had gone to make up the 420 drops.

### An Agreement.

Father (to son who has failed in his examination three times)—I made a mistake in sending you to college. I ought to have apprenticed you to a locksmith or some other trade."

Son—My dear father, I have often thought the same, especially when I have been out at night and have forgotten my latchkey.—*Fliegende Blatter.*

### How He K new.

Ted—He proposed last night and she refused him.

Ned—Did he tell you?

Ted—No.

Ned—Then how do you know?

Ted—I passed the house when he was bidding her good night, and he said it only once.

### Willing to Condense.

"I—I must not listen to you, Mr. Cophead," protested the blushing girl, with eyes downcast. "You are only trifling, and—and, besides it is getting late."

"Please hear me out, Miss Helen!" pleaded the infatuated young reporter. "I'll cut it down to 250 words!"

### A Different Boy.

"You say your boy is a somnambulist?"

"Yes; gets up in the night."

"He's a good deal different from my boy; I can't get him up in the morning."—*New York Press.*

## CURIOUS FUNERAL CUSTOMS.

### Coffins With Movable Bottoms in Use Among Poor Russians.

The foreigners who work in Eastern Connecticut mills have some curious burial customs, especially the Russian Jews, 600 of whom dwell in Norwalk. Not long ago a Russian Jew family had a funeral, and before the ceremony took place the head of the house visited a local undertaker, saying: "Have you a coffin with a movable bottom?" He spoke in a singular patois, and the undertaker had great difficulty to comprehend his intention. He wanted a "show coffin," in which the body was to be taken to the cemetery and lowered into the grave; then the coffin must be drawn out of the grave, leaving its bottom lid with the body in the ground.

The coffin was to be returned to the undertaker and the man pay him for the use of it. Poor Russians, it appears, are in the habit of burying their dead in that way, and undertakers in that country have a supply of show or "removable" coffins to let. They are handsome and costly ones—too expensive to be purchased outright by the poor—with elegant linings and heavy silver trimmings. The bottom is fastened to the body of the coffin with springs that may be tripped, and then it is released, together with the body. The body is left in a plain, cheap box.

The Norwich undertakers had no such contrivance, so the poor Russian consulted with his friends, who united with him in having a show coffin constructed and paying for it. It is to be used by them henceforth as a "community" coffin.

A curious incident in connection with a French-Canadian funeral took place recently at Putnam, a large manufacturing village north of Norwich. The funeral was that of a beautiful little child. The train, a very large one, with many carriages, had gone a little way down the main street of Putnam when it came to a halt in front of Benoit's photograph gallery. The mourners alighted from their vehicles and gathered about the hearse, and the pallbearers then removed therefrom the tiny white coffin and carried it up stairs into the gallery, the mourners following them. The coffin was set upright on a table in the middle of a room, and Mr. Benoit took a photograph of the dead child's face in its diamond-shaped coffin frame. Then the coffin was returned to the hearse and the train went on to the cemetery.

### They Were Good Judges.

A rather pointed story is told of Senator Blackburn of Kentucky and the late Senator Beck, which is given in the editor's drawer of *Harper's Magazine* without varnish. Upon one occasion it was necessary to test some old bourbon whiskey before shipping the simon pure to a fastidious customer. The anxious dealer bethought him of these two great men, who were universally admitted to be connoisseurs in the article, and begged their indulgence in the matter of tasting the liquor. Blackburn swallowed a sip, smacked his lips, looked a little bit critical, tried it again, and then said: "It is fair—very fair—but," again smacking his lips, "it seems to me I taste iron in it." The dealer looked discouraged. Beck went through the same process of tasting and trying, at last exclaiming: "That's good—very good—but I think I detect a taste of leather." The dealer's face fell. But feeling sure he had a superior article, he investigated. After a diligent search he found a carpet-tack with a leather cap in the bottom of the cask.

### Montana's Frank Bachelors.

From the New Haven Register.

The census of 1890 reports the proportion of males to females in Montana as almost exactly two to one. The figures are: Males, 87,882; females, 44,277. The ratio is maintained quite evenly throughout the state. Montana men come east for wives, and, when they are unable to do that, advertise extensively in a Chicago matrimonial paper. They recite their virtues as frankly and modestly as does a manufacturer of washing powder, seeking to place wares on the market.